

*Our Fathers and Mothers*

Shepherd's Grace Church

October 20, 2013 (Cowboy Church)

**Luke 18:1-8**

18Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. <sup>2</sup>He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. <sup>3</sup>In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' <sup>4</sup>For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, <sup>5</sup>yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" <sup>6</sup>And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. <sup>7</sup>And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? <sup>8</sup>I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? (Read also 2Tim. 3: 14-4: 5)

The apostle instructs Paul this morning to continue in what he has learned from his childhood! As we gather on Cowboy Church Sunday, that seems like an appropriate place to start our conversation! What have we learned from our childhood? What have our parents taught us? Just what have we learned from *Our Mothers and Fathers*? Let's start at the bottom. We learned to tie our shoes...but most are wearing boots or slip on's today so really...just how much did that help! Moving up, we learned to put on clean underwear...you know...just in case we were in an accident and had to go to the hospital! That seems helpful...unless, of course, the accident causes an accident. They taught us to put our shirt on frontwards by looking for the tag in the back...but now most of our t-shirts don't have tags...they are itchy and scratch...again, not much help! They taught us to take our hat off when we come indoors...and you can see just how much I paid attention to that one!

But they taught us to read! Night after night, when my daughters were young, my favorite part of the day was when it finally got to be close to bed time and they would climb up in my lap and I would read to them. They looked at the pictures and they listened and they laughed and they learned. Our Mothers and Our Fathers taught us to read! One thing they taught us to read was the Bible. We read and we learned the stories of Adam and Eve, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of Moses and David. We read about Sampson and Delilah and the importance of a good haircut! We learned about Joshua and the walls of Jericho!

The apostle tells Timothy that all scripture is useful. It teaches and it corrects. Scripture trains and prepares us to live in a world where often times right and wrong are only viewed as opinions. Our Mothers and Fathers did not believe that right and wrong were only a matter of opinion. They believed

that there are absolutes in this world. They knew there is good and there is evil in this world and they sought to teach us the difference. They studied, they read, and they taught us the stories of Jesus so we might understand justice; so we might understand righteousness; so we might live in a world moving forward with a purpose and not toward a precipice!

A point that has been brewing in Luke's gospel for the last two or three weeks is clarified this morning and the apostle's letter to Timothy helps make it crystal clear! The point is about how we read these scriptures Timothy is being told about. Are the words just words on a page for us? Are they just cute stories we can tell our children too or is there something more to what is made known in the book we call the Bible? I believe Our Mothers and Our Fathers knew the answer!

I believe Our Mothers and Our Fathers not only intended us to learn to read the Bible, but they wanted us to know how to read the Bible. They wanted us to know how to read the stories of Jesus the same way they learned how to read the stories. Our parent's parents taught them to read the Bible beyond the words on the page! Our parent's parents taught them to read the bible not for the present, not for the entertainment, but for the future! Those who came before us knew that the lessons we learned in the Bible were useful, not for our present but for our future.

Our Mothers and Fathers knew that the story of the Prodigal Son was not a story of present day salvation for a wayward son, but that it was a story of the life of future generations of a father who recognized the greatness of an awesome God! Our Mothers and Fathers knew that the story of the rich fool was not a story of the current predicament of a lucky person without common sense, but rather a story intended to invite a deeper relationship with the living God who alone offers treasure to all people! Our Mothers and Fathers knew that the story of Lazarus and the rich man was not a story of a present day person who died without knowing Jesus but rather an admonition to future generations to pay attention to the important lessons of the day!

They looked around them and saw the folly of the present. They knew that people were being tempted by the world and worldly wealth and treasure. They were afraid the folly would continue! What kind of folly did they see you ask? Here are just a few of the laws written on the books of the state of Kansas in past generations.

- Rabbits may not be shot from motorboats.
- It is illegal for chicken thieves to work during daylight hours.
- Pedestrians crossing the highways at night must wear tail lights.
- No one may catch fish with his bare hands.
- It is illegal to put ice cream on cherry pie.
- The state game rule prohibits the use of mules to hunt ducks.
- If two trains meet on the same track, neither shall proceed until the other has passed.
- It is illegal to hunt whales.

-Pedestrians crossing the highways at night to wear tail lights.

### *Kansas City Laws*

Derby:

-It is illegal to urinate on the side of a building.

-Hitting a vending machine that stole your money is illegal.

-Persons may not "screech" their tires while driving and if caught can be charged up to 500\$

-Riding an llama down any road is against the law and you could face a 100\$ fine.

Dodge City:

-It is illegal to spit on a sidewalk.

Kansas City:

-Saying the name "George Washington" without adding the phrase "blessed be his name," can land you with a fine of up to fifty cents.

Lang:

-You may not ride a mule down Main Street, unless the animal is wearing a straw hat.

Lawrence:

-All cars entering the city limits must first sound their horn to warn the horses of their arrival.-No one may wear a bee in their hat.

Natoma:

-It's illegal to throw knives at men wearing striped suits.

Overland Park:

-One may not picket a funeral unless they come 61 minutes after the funeral.

Russell:

-Musical car horns are banned.

Salina:

-It is against the law to leave your car running unattended.

Topeka:

-It is illegal to drive one's car through a parade.

-All weeds must be removed from your yard.

-You may not whistle during the night.

-Spitting on sidewalks is forbidden.

-Snowball fights are illegal.

-It is forbidden to serve wine in teacups.

-Dead deer may not be hauled across Kansas Avenue.

-Driving a herd of cattle through this town is outlawed.

-Pit Bull's are not allowed within city limits.

-No one may scream at a haunted house.

-The installation of bathtubs is prohibited.

Wichita:

-One can be sent to jail for up to a year for making lewd comments over the telephone.

-You may not swim in pools.

-One must get a permit from the city if they wish to take dirt from the airport.

-Before proceeding through the intersection of Douglas and Broadway, a motorist is required to get out of their vehicle and fire three shot gun rounds into the air.

-Any person caught using or carrying bean snappers or the like shall upon conviction, be fined

I shared some of the more humorous ones to illustrate the folly of the day for Our Mothers and

Fathers! The truth is, Our Mothers and Fathers knew a much, much deeper folly and they were concerned! They looked at the prevalent positions of their day and they worried for our future! They read the words of our Declaration of Independence and believed the sentiment set forth there. We hold these truths to be self evident, they heard. All men are created equal they heard! All men are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights they heard! These rights include life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness they heard!

They not only saw the folly of the ridiculous laws written on the books, they saw the futility of the lives of those excluded by the words of independence we declared. The rights of all were not affirmed initially. Black men only counted as 3/5 of a man in the original words of our constitution. Women did not count at all. Our Mothers and Fathers saw the present situation they lived in and recognized that the promise of our liberty must lie in the future! They read the Bible and they taught their children and gradually the future came into the present. Gradually blacks were counted as equal. Gradually, women were counted as people. The future promise of God's kingdom was gradually in their midst!

One of the stories of hope that Our Mothers and Fathers would have turned to as an example of the future they longed for is the story Luke tells this morning! The story features an unjust judge. Our Mothers and Fathers saw injustice in the world they lived in. They experienced trials of their own, but they also saw the social injustice of their world. They saw the different swimming pools right here in Arkansas City. They witnessed the separate water fountains with signs above them. "For Whites Only" and they lived through the common language of people being called routinely by names which served to call out their difference. They knew of the unjust judge. They knew of the Ku Klux Klan!

Our Mothers and Fathers looked beyond the present day reality and longed for a future for their children where that kind of injustice could not be tolerated! They saw the widow. They knew her from her poverty and in 21.3 they remembered how she gave all she had. They witnessed the oppression of the more powerful taking from the less powerful as Jesus indicts the Pharisees for devouring the widows houses in 20.47. But the future they longed for was brought out in the widow also. In 2.37 Anna, the widow prays without ceasing at the temple. In 4.25 Jesus mentions the widow at Zarephath who cares for Elijah. From these stories Our Mothers and Fathers found hope for a future. They read their Bible and they taught it to us not for our present day, but they taught us for a future!

They taught us so we might learn to pray, to not lose hope, to persevere! That is what Jesus wants us to learn today! That is what the apostle wants Timothy to learn! That is what God wants us to teach to our children! Today we remember Our Mothers and Fathers but we pray that our children will remember theirs!

Luke's gospel is a focus on prayer! In chapter 11 the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray! Jesus gives them the Lord's prayer! The prayer is not a laundry list of needs we have, but a conversation with God that invites us into a present moment that will lead to a future possibility! In chapter 12, Jesus teaches how God provides for us, not in this moment but in our future. God does provide for our basic needs but he also intends to give us three great gifts, the Holy Spirit, Justice, and the kingdom, His kingdom that will come!

Today as we celebrate Cowboy Church, we look back to a simpler time and we realize a strategic promise! Our Mothers and Fathers wanted to share with us a future, a future beyond the inequality they witnessed, a future beyond the struggles over race and sexual superiority! They wanted to give us a future that lived into the fullness of the promise offered in our "Declaration of Independence!" They wanted a day when not just all men, but all people were perceived as equal and they persisted as the widow persists to accomplish that day and to provide it for themselves...yes, but also for their posterity!

Our Mothers and Fathers whom we celebrate this morning cried out for justice. They saw the inequity of the system. They saw the corruptibility of people like the unjust judge, and they knew there was something more! They longed for the more...for them and for us! Jesus' parable today is all about justice! Jesus' parable suggests that prayer is all about justice.

He wants his disciples to pray how...without ceasing and without losing heart! He wants them to persevere in the struggles of the day not so the day can be made perfect, but so the kingdom might come. He wants them to realize that they are God's chosen ones! They are the ones who will overcome the injustices of their world so that their children might know a better world. He wants us to know that we are they! We are to persevere! We are to teach! We are to struggle! We are to overcome! He wants us to know that by faith we shall overcome!

Jesus calls us the chosen ones of God! He suggests that by our persistence God will hear our cry and will quickly answer our cries for justice. What does he mean when he says that we are the chosen ones. We are not Hebrews. We are not Jewish. We are not the race of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. How then can we be the chosen?

As His disciples, we are the ones who have believed. We are the ones who have accepted. We are the ones who have decided to follow Jesus! In Romans chapter 9, the Apostle Paul takes up this very argument. He recognizes that initially God has called a specific group of people. They are to be God's own. They are to be children of the covenant. "You will be my people," God says, "and I will be your God!" They are to be heirs to the promise. "Follow me, and I will make of you a great nation." However, those to whom Jesus speaks this morning in Luke's gospel have not followed. They have not believed. Many have rejected, many more have doubted! Paul says, then that to be God's chosen is not a matter of race or nationality. To be God's chosen is to accept the covenant, to honor the promise and to recognize the power of God to move beyond what is possible and accomplish that which is necessary!

The disciples are those who believe this statement and accept on faith God's willingness to fulfill his promise of love to them, to us, even in the midst of the rejection of many. Some would claim to be children of Abraham and therefore have a lock on the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan. Matthew tells us in his chapter 3 that this claim is invalid. "Do not," he says, "pretend to say we are children of Abraham and therefore heirs to the promise of God, for God could, from these very stones raise up children of Abraham!"

In this reality, the disciples recognize that being believers is not a matter of birth but a matter of faith! Our mothers and fathers knew this just as the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christian followers of Jesus knew this! Both our ancient ancestors and our more recent ancestors believed in the future promise of God and it is for that promise that they prayed, for that promise they longed, for that promise they

trusted and for that promise they believed.

Our mothers and fathers knew of the unjust judge. They knew of his corruption, but they also knew that God could use even the unjust to accomplish God's purposes. They knew the stories of Joseph's brothers and how they sold him into slavery but how God used even that slavery to deliver His people from starvation and extinction into a promised land more complete than any they could have ever imagined. They knew of countless other stories that pointed to the words God speaks from the mouth of the prophet, Jeremiah. "I have a plan for you and it is a plan to prosper you and not to bring you to harm." So even in the face of injustice they persisted. They pushed at the injustice of their day so that we might have a future! They read their bible as their mothers and fathers had taught them to read. They read from the future! They read from a reality that was not yet real! They read from God's plan and not from their own!

Today, as we step into our own past, as we hear songs of the simpler times of the "old west," let us step into the future of our parents. Let us once again hear the story of the unjust judge! Let us recognize that it is not a lesson in futility but in the future of possibility. Let us pray together today for a future filled with that possibility and let us recognize that we are the mothers and fathers of God's future for our posterity!

Let us pray today as Jesus is urging us to pray. Let us pray without ceasing! Each morning when we wake, let us thank our God who is Father to us all. Let us remember that we are the stones God has raised up to be "children of Abraham, heirs to the promise of redemption in Jesus Christ!" Let us ask for our basic needs, our "daily bread," so that we might have the strength to see the Kingdom in us and around us and as a part of us! Let us seek God's guidance as we strive to avoid evil in our own lives and to set an example for love for others!

Let us strive for justice in our world. Let us see all people as equal. Let us recognize in those who believe differently than we do the possibility that God is working in them and through us. Let us truly believe that we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength (Phil. 4: 13) and that without Christ we can do nothing! In all things let us seek to love others as we love ourselves and above all else, let us love the Lord our God with all our heart, our soul, our strength, and our mind!

Perhaps in this way, we can remember our mothers and our fathers. Perhaps in this way we can envision a future for our children that is brighter than the one we can imagine for ourselves. Perhaps in this way we can anticipate a world that sets all people free to worship, to live, to love in the fullness that God intends! Perhaps in this way we can return to the simpler time of our mothers and fathers where we trust God to fulfill our needs and where we recognize that He will not long delay in answering our prayers!

Our mothers and fathers knew this time because they read the Bible from the future and not from the present. They were not overcome by the stress of today because they believed in the simplicity of God's promise for tomorrow! They knew that the God of justice would use even the injustice of their world to accomplish the redemption of all people and they believed they were a part of His glorious plan for that redemption. They believed in us! They believed in our willingness to accept God's divine plan for us! They believed that when the Son of Man returned, he would see the evidence of their faith lived out in the future they prepared and we inherited. Will we prepare that same kind of future for our children?

Today, I invite you to pray without ceasing and do not loose heart! Amen!